



The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo - A Philosophical Analysis

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Abstract: The present work is an attempt to analyse the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in a philosophical perspective. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj' which means 'to yoke' or 'to unite', it means the linking or union of the human consciousness with something higher, something transcendent, something eternal and divine. It is a system of integral and spiritual education, education not only of the body and the mind but also of the inner spirit. The final aim of Integral yoga is the union of the *Jivatma* (individual soul) with *Paramatma* (the Supreme Soul). The basic aim of all kind of yoga is the realisation of the divine or the realisation of unity. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is an attempt to give a synthesis of all the main Yogas and of their philosophies. According to Sri Aurobindo, "yoga is integral or synthetic because it comprehends all forms of yoga." In Aurobindo yoga, which he has called the Integral Yoga.

Keywords: integral yoga, transformation, divine, psychic transformation, spiritual transformation, supramental transformation, psychic being.

Introduction

The word 'yoga Literally' means 'Union', and therefore, the basic aim of all kinds of yoga is the realisation of the Devine-the Realisation of unity. According to Sri Aurobindo "All life is a yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself." In Aurobindo yoga, which he has called the Integral Yoga. In the opening paragraph he states: "I have never said that my yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many process of the old Yogas -its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method." Though Sri Aurobindo says that the Integral Yoga is not brand new in all its elements, some of the new elements of his yoga are nothing short of revolutionary in relation to the previous Yogas. The most radical new element of the Integral Yoga lies in its aim. Sri Aurobindo admits that life process, in a sense, is itself a yoga, because every activity is an activity towards the realisation of unity, being an expression of the infinite within us. The aim of Integral yoga is transformation of the world and the establish of a divine life on earth. According to Sri Aurobindo, yoga is integral or synthetic because it comprehends all forms of yoga. Integral yoga emphasises various aspect of yoga discipline that are missed by other form of yoga. In the Bhagavad Gita, we find Hatha yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga and Karma yoga. Every yoga recommends various disciplines for practices. In Hatha yoga, which recommends the various discipline of the body. "Hathayoga selects the body and the vital functioning as its instruments of perfection and realisation; its concern is with the gross body. Raja yoga concentrates on mind. Raja yoga select the mental being in its different parts as its lever-power, it concentrates on the subtle body". Jnana yoga recommends the way of knowledge, Bhakti yoga and Karma yoga recommend devotion and action respectively. Sri Aurobindo feels that for the holistic growth human being need all types of yoga, not only jnana yoga or Bhakti yoga can be transform into spiritualisation. According to him perfection includes perfection of mind and body, so that the highest result of Raja yoga. However, Sri Aurobindo's yoga is an inner- yoga because it required some disciplines to purification of the body, mind and soul.

The aim of Integral yoga is the conscious union with the Divine in the Supermind and the Transformation of the nature. Integral yoga seeks to transform not just the mind but also the life force and physical body, bringing about a holistic change. According to him, "the ordinary yoga go straight from Mind in to some featureless condition of the cosmic silence and through it try to disappear upward into the Highest." The object of this yoga is to transcend mind and enter into the Devine Truth of '*Sachchidananda*' which is not only static but dynamic and raise the whole being into that Truth." He says that "the ordinary Yoga does not go beyond the spiritual mind-people feel at the top of the head the joining with the Brahman, but they are not aware of a consciousness above the head. In the same way in the ordinary Yoga, one feels the ascent of the awakened inner consciousness to the '*brahmarandra*' where the *Prakriti* joins the Brahman-consciousness, but they do not feel the descent." He thinks that "There can be no yoga of knowledge without a human seeker of the knowledge, the supreme subject of knowledge and the divine use by the individual of the universal faculties of knowledge; no yoga of devotion without the human God-lover, the supreme object of love and delight and the divine use by the universal faculties of

spiritual, emotional and aesthetic enjoyment; no yoga of works without the human worker, the supreme will, master of all works and sacrifices, and the divine use by the individual of the universal faculties of power and action.

Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is an attempt to give a synthesis of all the main yogas and of their philosophies. For the contact of the human and individual consciousness with the divine is the very essence of yoga. 'Yog' is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality. Sri Aurobindo says, 'Our yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rise higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down (the divine) power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body and the highest of this level is ...supermind.' Only when that can be brought down is a divine transformation possible in the earth-consciousness.

In the ordinary yoga, the term transformation' is applied to what appears to be complete change of moral nature, but Sri Aurobindo uses the term for a total change of the outer nature- mental, vital, physical, subconscious. As he states: "What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the self, or realisation of the one which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscious." Sri Aurobindo, in his statement on the integral Yoga, mentions element belongings to the older system of yoga which are also part of the Integral Yoga. The most significant new element in the Integral Yoga lies in its aim, namely, Transformation, a "complete change down to the physical", and "the manifestation of new Nature in the earth consciousness." Man is in his self a unique self a unique person, but he is also in his manifestation of self a multiperson...." in this statement Sri Aurobindo makes a distinction which is fundamental in understanding his explanation of the nature of the human being, the distinction between the person and its many personalities. "

According to Sri Aurobindo, A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of right action, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life." He also says that the transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the spirit; it takes up Matter as form of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo suggest a process that is Tripple Transformation- Psychic Transformation, Spiritual Transformation, Supramental Transformation. Transformation is to overcome such limitation man much follow a process of self-discovery in which he uncovers his divine nature. According to him, "By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being."

Psychic Transformation: The unfolding of the psychic soul is the first step towards supramental change. It is a movement within, away from the surface of life, to the depth culminating discovery of the evolving soul. It means to realise the centrality of the psychic being—the *Jivatma* which represent the Divine in man. Sri Aurobindo feels that the first step is to awaken it. As Sri Aurobindo says, "the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all the essential possibilities of manifestation but is not constituted by them, it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and deprivations of the surface being."

Spiritual Transformation: Spiritualisation is the second step of yoga. Sri Aurobindo feels that when the soul is awakened and is able to guide and regulate life and mind, it must try to bring about a spiritual change in its conscious life. Psychic change, in a way, is a change within the limits of natural aspects – surface and subliminal, on the other hand, spiritual change rises above and seeks to bring down into play the aspects of the higher realm.

Supramental Transformation: In this stage consciousness is fully divinised and the entire point of view changes. All forces of disunity and duality are superseded and the vision of complete unity emerges. Supramental Transformation brings about two changes - Universalisation, which is nothing but expansion of consciousness and transcendentalism, which is nothing but the knowledge of the identity of the Divine. These three stages represent the three transformation which are essential for the realisation of Divine.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, Man, at present, lives mostly his surface mind, life and body. there is an inner being within which pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty harmony power and knowledge. The object of integral yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth. From the view point of Sri Aurobindo's taught, the human being is inseparably one with the universal being. There are, he says "two system simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts" – a concentric system and a vertical system. The concentric system is like a series of rings or sheaths, consisting of the outer being, the inner being, the inner being and the inmost being. According to Aurobindo, human being has two beings one is Inner being and another is outer being which is the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life body consciousness; another behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self. The inner being is composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical –but that is not the psychic being. The psychic being is the inmost being and quite distinct from this.

Describing the nature of yoga Sri Aurobindo says, Yoga means union with the Divine, a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic(universal) or individual or as in our yoga all three together." According to Sri Aurobindo a knowledge that is not what we call knowledge but something self-existent, everlasting, infinite. The state of knowledge is consciousness not temporal; the main aim of knowledge is to attain the Nirvana. The status of knowledge is the Self, the Divine, The Supreme Reality, the All, The Transcendent, - one in all these aspects is the object of Yogic knowledge. Ordinary objects, external appearances of life and matter, the psychology of our thoughts and action, the perception of the forces of the apparent world can be part of this knowledge.

Conclusion:

The Integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo is the outcome of his profound ontological experience of the Omniscient Reality, of the integral truth of life and existence. Reality for him is multi-dimensional and integral, both Being and Becoming, Omniscience and Omnipotence. The Integral yoga plays a vital role in total transformation among physical, mental and spiritual. In the conclusion we find that Sri

Aurobindo Yoga is integral or synthetic, because it comprehends all forms of yoga and it emphasise such aspect of yoga discipline that are missed by other form of yoga. Sri Aurobindo feels that every yoga has different aspect of the whole process and neglect the other ones. Sri Aurobindo feels that what is needed is an all-round and total development. The growth of knowledge alone, or the perfection and control of only the body, or the way of intense devotion will not bring about the change. What is needed is a total transformation of all the aspect of being -the mental. The vital and the physical. Therefore, only that process can be Purna yoga which will aim at the complete transformation of every aspect of being. This is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, and therefore it is called Integral.

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